

C R I T I C A L D I G E S T

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MERCHANT OF VENICE

MY THREE LOVES

EDDIE ALBERT TV

ANTA FORUM

NEWCOMER OF PROMISE PROFILE-

' NYC Current Theatre '

Wonderful Town-Winter Garden 2/25/53. A great big unanimous "wonderful" greeted Rosalind Russell in Robert Fryer production of musical adaption of My Sister Eileen. Wonderful was also word to sum up unanimous approval of book by Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov, music by Leonard Bernstein, direction by George Abbot, lyrics by Betty Compton and Adolph Green, sets and costumes by Raoul Pene de Bois and dances staged by Donald Saddler. Supporting cast headed by newcomer Edith Adams, George Gaynes, Chris Alexander, Jordan Bentley and Dort Clark were also applauded, but most of the adjectives and space went to Russell. Atkinson, Times, cheered that she should certainly run for president in 1960 for her memorable performance. Her comedy can be broad and subtle, she radiates the genuine comic spirit. Kerr, Herald Tribune, counted 4 show stopping numbers by the star. Admitting that her singing voice isn't more than amiable croak, critic applauds her for putting numbers over. Critic also noted that at times Bernstein's adventurousness in music goes a little far afield. Coleman, Mirror, adds a tasty, tuneful, tonic, while Winchell bills it as Hilarious, Immense, Terrific! Watts, Post, bills it as the most notable musical comedy since Pal Joey, with critic giving his top honors to fresh and original lyrics and score. Reason this musical based on play by same authors fares better than recent exhibits, believes WEVD Shipley, is that original was better than most. WCBS Leonard sole critic to consider first act weaker than second, but later half enough to make it smash hit.

John Brown's Body- Century 2/14/53. Weekly reviewers filed diverse verdict on Paul Gregory's production of dramatic reading of Stephen Vincent Benet's epic poem, starring Tyrone Power, Raymond Massey and Judith Anderson. Keating, Cue, joined daily colleagues who raved. Except for fact that onstage chorus at times made work sound like Norman Corwin radio drama, Cue critic found it an interesting, unusual theatrical experience. Beaufort, Christian Science Monitor, praised it as a tremendous, inspired evening's entertainment. He agreed with Cue reviewer that Charles Laughton as director and adaptor played an important role in the proceedings. But more important was the new dimension given "dramatic readings." Dramatic line and poetic line here have been brought together with a marvelous sense of proportion, he feels. But Gibbs, New Yorker, and Bentley. New Republic, panned proceedings. Former felt that unlike Don Juan In Hell, this is not a piece of quite sufficient merit for so stately and even most worshipful treatment. The verse strikes Gibbs as often painfully flat and monotonous. Latter critic voted against it because proceedings are poetry that seldom manages to be poetry, and reading that is seldom content to be mere reading. Poem is presented with such an air of sublimity as even a poem that deserved it could not support, he added. Critic sees this and other works of Laughton as the actor's evasion of theatre itself.

Picnic- Music Box 2/19/53. Majority of weekly reviewers agreed that William Inge fulfilled promise shown in his 1950 Come Back, Little Sheba. Tradepaper reviewers Hobe, Variety, and Francis, Billboard, okayed it as exciting, emotional theatre. Ralph Meeker, Janice Rule, Kim Stanley and entire cast were billed as perfect, with credit given Joshua Logan for lively direction. Most doubted if they knew main point author was trying to make, but that this fact didn't dull their enjoyment of play. Gibbs, New Yorker, noted that for all play's dramatic shaplessness, it is an interesting and unusual piece, full of accurately observed detail, sensitively recorded speech, and that rare kind of humor that almost needs no assistance from dialogue. Time reviewer and WEVD Shipley disagreed. Despite fact that it does keep faith with its material, Time man thought that much of it seems straggling and merely approximate; it lacks form and expressive detail, and more evocative language. Shipley panned it as being close to the most trite, obvious, dull, poorly acted, directed, designed plays of all times. Supposed beauty sprawls at various spots onstage, he complains, without either taste or beauty. Set, which most liked, he condemned as a store-house combination of Dynamo and All My Sons.

' Off Broadway Notes '

Equity Library Theatre has denied reports that it plans to retrench its program. Actors Equity Committee headed by Marjorie Gateson will head a group which will investigate the structural and procedural aspects of ELT. During recent fund raising efforts Whitney Foundation granted \$2500 to ELT...Next production at ELT Playhouse is Mamba's Daughters, presented March 11-15...New Playwrights presents The Big Deal, a new play by Ossie Davis at 405 W 45 starting March 6...American Negro Theatre Guild formed by Frederick O'Neal, Bernard Delfont and John Wildberg will present Anna Lucrezia and 2 other plays opening in Portsmouth, England in late April. After London engagement at Coronation time a world tour is planned...Frances Adler will present new off Broadway group in The Sea Gull in late March...Dino Diluca, Time of the Cuckoo, played in an Italian play L'Altro Uomo at Brooklyn Academy of Music for 2 Sunday performances...Circle in Square presents The Barrier, arena production of Langston Hughes-Jan Meyerowitz opera on 2 Monday evenings...Arena Guild of America will present first annual Robert Garland Award for most outstanding contribution of year to arena playing on May 31. Garland, former Journal American drama critic, is chairman of the guild's advisory board.

Monday's Hero, new play by Les FINE presented at Greenwich Mews Theatre, offers diversion for an off Broadway evening, okays Rice, Post. Though nothing new is said on the subject of integrity vs. economic security, it is said tensely, tersely and at times with humor...Equity Library Community Theatre performance of Man and Superman, presented at DeWitt Clinton HS, Bronx, enjoyed by Rice, Post, and Funke, Times, as a well done production of famed Shaw classic...American Theatre Wing's Community Players production of Ester Hawley's To Live in Faith, presented to the Voluntary International Assistance Panel of the US National Commission for UNESCO is an experience, Rice, Post, will not forget. Playlet explaining UNESCO gift coupon plan was well received...Blackfriars' Guild current production of Angelic Doctor approved by WFUV FM Bob Kass. While Rev Brendan Larnen's play on Thomas Aquinas lacks a certain element of cohesion, critic feels that it more than compensates for the sketchiness by its sincerity and simplicity.

' LA Theatre Notes '

Ethan Frome, play by Owen Davis, opens at Players Ring March 3...Nightshade, new mystery by Ken Englund and Sidney Field opens March 12 at Pasadena Playhouse...LA Critics raved over opening production of Ebony Showcase Theatre, new Negro acting company. First production is Anna Lucrezia, with Muriel Mann playing title role. Greene, Examiner, found the casting and production excellent throughout, while Bongard, News, predicts group will be around for a long time. News critic would like to see them tackle an Ibsen drama...Pasadena Playhouse production of Bell, Book and Candle, with K.T. Stevens and Hugh Marlowe, enjoyed by all LA critics. Play is first in series which will run at theatre as long as business warrents.

' Broadway Gripe Box '

Entertainment workers and fans are invited to file "gripes" against critics, general and/or specific, in "Broadway Gripe Box" % Critical Digest, 505-5th Ave, NYC. Identity of "grippers" will be held confidential, but each letter must be signed and must have proper home address. Best 3 gripes of week, in opinion of editor, will receive a gift of a new theatre book.

' Green Room Department '

CRITICS AT WORK...Bentley, New Republic, claims that management of John Brown's Body told him there were no seats available at the opening, and that they would like to talk matters over before admitting him because they thought there was a danger of his reviewing it unfavorably. Critic reports he had no difficulty buying opening night seats. He also noted that they were right about the unfavorable review, though they were wrong on the grounds. (Digest of reviews on page 2)...Printing of Misalliance reviews day after preview by some papers instead of holding them for day as planned angered many NY critics, Variety states. Atkinson, Times, told the trade paper that he was angry for himself for not printing it the day after the preview. Difficulties arose due to show's conflict with Iggie.

ENGLISH VIEW OF NY...Tardiness of theatre goers and their rudeness in leaving show before final curtain were 2 main impressions Manchester, Stage, took back to England after a tour of NY theatre going. He was also surprised and shocked at prolonged applause at entrance of each important player.

COLUMN TIPS...Speculators asked for and got \$85 per pair for opening night ducats to Wonderful Town, repeats Kilgallen...Playwright who took sleeping pills when his show folded out of town is better; the show will open after all, whispers Wilson...Certain producers wanted to halt City Center's move of Misalliance to Barrymore, reports McCord, Herald Tribune, because they thought it constituted unfair competition.

TICKET SELLERS GRIPES...Theatre going public is a super race demanding perfection and will insult and sneer at any and all ticket sellers, Mulligan, News, discovered in a survey of NYC ticket sellers and agency men. Half of the customers want the first row, while the other half always want the cheapest seats. Not all theatre goers are offenders, they pointed out, but there are enough of the breed to make every day a headache for the ticket seller.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...NY producers need more willingness to break new ground and not rely on foreign plays and old American scripts, complains Pearson, NBC Critic at Large...Drama critics will have to postpone their annual holidays to well past June, predicts Coleman, Mirror...Coughers at opening of John Brown's Body, pans Sheaffer, Eagle, sounded like a herd of barking seals.

ART & THEATRE...Theatre as a theme for artists seems even less fertile than other subjects, comments Genauer, Herald Tribune. Artists Equity show of theatre subjects proved very disappointing to art critic because of lack of exciting visual stimulation. Pieces ranged from dull to awful, and critic wonders what plain landscapes have to do with any phase of drama.

' Theatre News Roundup '

Shows that closed include Bernardine, The Deep Blue Sea...Two's Company to tour after March 28 closing...New Faces starts Sunday afternoon and evening performances March 8...Sue Hight to replace Isabel Bigley, Guys and Dolls...Bramwell Fletcher to replace Richard Purdy, Misalliance, when show moves to Barrymore March 6...New Haven RR ran show train from NY to New Haven for Camino Real tryout...Writings and manuscripts of Gilbert Gabriel, late drama critic of Cue, presented to NY Public Library Theatre Collection...Victor Moore celebrated his 76th birthday at Sardi party.

